

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 4 and 15.

Please amend the following claim.

1. (Amended) A process for the preparation of a pigment dispersion which comprises (a) a pigment surface treatment step of introducing at least one hydrophilic dispersibility-providing group onto the surface of a pigment directly and/or with the interposition of a polyvalent group to form a surface-treated pigment that is self-dispersible in water and that comprises said at least one hydrophilic dispersibility-providing group in an amount of not lower than 10×10^{-6} equivalent per gram of particulate pigment, (b) a dispersion step of dispersing a surface-treated pigment obtained at said surface treatment step in an aqueous medium, wherein said dispersion step involves the dispersion of said surface-treated pigment in admixture with a wetting agent and water wherein the wetting agent is selected from the group consisting of acetylene glycols, acetylene alcohols, glycol ethers and alkylene glycols; and is present in an amount that enhances a dispersion efficiency of particles of the surface-treated pigment in water, (c) adding a resin for providing dispersibility and/or fixability during and/or after said dispersion step to form said pigment dispersion, wherein the pigment dispersion has a liquid component comprising polyvalent metal ions in a total amount of not more than 600 ppm.

7. (Amended) The process for the preparation of a pigment dispersion according to Claim 1, wherein said hydrophilic dispersibility-providing group to be introduced onto the surface of a pigment at said surface treatment step comprises at least one

selected from the group consisting of functional groups represented by the following general formulae and salts thereof:

-OM, -COOM, -CO, -SO₃M, -SO₂M, -SO₂M, -SO₂NH₂ -

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RSO₂M, -PO₃HM, -PO₃M₂, -SO₂NHCOR, -NH₃, and -NR₃ in which M represents a hydrogen atom, alkaline metal, ammonium or organic ammonium; and R represents a C₁₋₁₂ alkyl group, a phenyl group which may have a substituent or a naphthyl group which may have a substituent.

Please add the following new claims.

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27. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein the wetting agent is present in an amount of from 0.1 to 30% by weight based on the weight of the pigment dispersion in the dispersion step.

28. (New) The process according to claim 1, wherein the dispersion step results in a dispersion having a pigment concentration of from about 5 to 50% by weight.

29. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the resin comprises the vinyl polymer.

REMARKS

The Official Action of July 19, 2002 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been amended more clearly to distinguish over the cited art by the incorporation therein of the recitations formerly in Claims 4 and 15, and these latter claims